



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
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RICHARD J. CODEY
Acting Governor

www.nj.gov/health

FRED M. JACOBS, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

Dear Colleague:

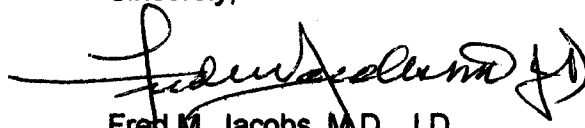
It has been 50 years since the development of the Salk polio vaccine. After the introduction of this vaccine, and soon afterward the Sabin oral vaccine, countless children and young adults were spared the ravages of poliomyelitis, or polio. Yet today in our nation there are over one million survivors of past polio epidemics, with an estimated 50,000 in New Jersey alone.

By the mid-1980's many polio survivors began to experience symptoms such as new weakness and pain in muscles, problems with sleeping, swallowing and breathing, severe fatigue, and a decline in the ability to carry out activities of daily living such as walking and bathing. These symptoms usually develop 15 years or more after the original illness and have now been recognized as post-polio syndrome, or PPS.

As a health care professional, you may see survivors of polio in your practice who describe a variety of neurological, orthopedic, musculoskeletal, emotional, medical, and/or rehabilitative complaints but do not make the connection with their earlier disease. These patients may need to be referred to neurologists or other specialists, preferably having experience with post-polio patients. After a diagnosis of PPS, treatment can often lessen or eliminate some of the symptoms. In New Jersey, legislation was enacted to ensure that information about post-polio syndrome would be made available to the general public. Two helpful Web sites out of many can be found at www.marchofdimes.com/printableArticles and www.inglewoodhospital.com/PostPolio. The Department will also be publishing additional information on PPS.

Notwithstanding, it is critical to maintain high levels of immunization coverage throughout the population in order to provide maximum protection to the community at large. In particular, we must remain diligent and immunize children. Most people infected with the polio virus have no symptoms, but some infections cause paralysis and even death. Vaccination will assure that herd immunity will provide protection from the disease when a case is introduced in the country from areas of the world where polio still exists. If you have any questions, please call the Immunization Program in the Department of Health and Senior Services at (609) 588-7512.

Sincerely,



Fred M. Jacobs, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner